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SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY  
SALVADORAN AIR FORCE

2. DELIBERATE AND SANCTIONED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES CEASED IN THE SALVADORAN AIR FORCE (FAES) A-11 DEPARTMENT AFTER THE APPOINTMENT OF MAJOR GUILLERMO ((RIVERA)) IN SEPTEMBER 1989. RIVERA ISSUED AN ORDER SHORTLY AFTER TAKING OVER THE A-11 THAT HE WOULD NOT CONCERN THE KILLINGS AND TORTURE OF PRISONERS AND ANY A-11 EMPLOYEES WHO CHOSE TO DO SO WOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. MAJOR MIGUEL ANTONIO ((MOJICA)) PADILLO, SUCCEEDED RIVERA IN OCTOBER 1990 AND CONTINUED HIS FAIR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. NOTED THAT ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES FOR THE A-11'S DEPARTURE FROM PAST PRACTICES IS STEADFAST COUNSELLING OF U.S. POLICY AGAINST SUCH ACTIVITIES, AND THE GROWING SUCCESS AND COMMENSURATE FAES COMMITMENT AND PRIDE IN THE AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM

3. PRIOR TO RIVERA'S ASSIGNMENT TO THE A-2 POSITION, GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WERE COMMON AT THE FAES

4. IN MID-1988, LEIVA WAS ASSIGNED AS THE FIRST A-11 UNDER THE NEWLY ORGANIZED AIR GENERAL STAFF. (PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF THE AIR GENERAL STAFF, THE A-11 WAS CALLED THE S-2 SECTION.) LEIVA HAD JUST RETURNED FROM TRAINING AT THE U.S. AIR FORCE COMMAND AND STAFF SCHOOL AND HAD EXPECTED TO BE ASSIGNED TO THE MORE POWERFUL A-111, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, POSITION. HOWEVER, LEIVA'S APPOINTMENT TO A-111 HAD BEEN BLOCKED BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL JUAN ANTONIO ((MARTINEZ)) VARELA, WHO CONVINCED THEN-FAES COMMANDER GENERAL JUAN ((BUSTILLO)) THAT LEIVA WAS AN OVERLY INDEPENDENT AND AMBITIOUS OFFICER. WHEN VARELA WAS ASSIGNED AS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF COMALAPA AIR BASE IN 1988, LEIVA CONVINCED BUSTILLO TO APPOINT HIM AS THE

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A-111. MAJOR JORGE ALBERTO ((QUINONES)) ROBLES WAS THEN ASSIGNED AS A-11. WITHIN TWO MONTHS, HOWEVER, QUINONES WAS SENT TO THE U.S. ARMY ADVANCED INFANTRY COURSE AT FORT BENNING, GEORGIA SO LEIVA RETAINED CONTROL OVER THE A-11 SECTION UNTIL THE SEPTEMBER 1989 APPOINTMENT OF MAJOR GUILLERMO ERNESTO ((RIVERA)) RODRIGUEZ TO THE A-11 POSITION.

5. [REDACTED] LEIVA EARNED A REPUTATION AS AN AGGRESSIVE, INDEPENDENT, AND SOMETIMES ARROGANT OFFICER. HE HAD BEEN THE CATALYST FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE RAPID RESPONSE AIRMOBILE "LIGHTING OPERATIONS" IN 1985 AND 1986 BY LEADING BOMBING ATTACKS, DIRECTING OPERATIONS FROM THE COMMAND HELICOPTER, AND LEADING TROOPS ON THE GROUND.

[REDACTED] LEIVA ALSO BELIEVED IN EXTREME MEASURES (EVEN BY SALVADORAN STANDARDS) AGAINST INSURGENTS OPERATING CLANDESTINELY IN URBAN AREAS. [REDACTED] LEIVA HAD TAKEN A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM THE FAES IN THE EARLY 1980'S TO SERVE AS ROBERTO ((D'AUBUISSON'S)) PERSONAL PILOT AND PARTICIPATE IN D'AUBUISSON'S DEATH SQUADS (NO FURTHER DETAILS). [REDACTED] SPECULATED LEIVA WAS INVOLVED IN THE PLOT TO ASSASSINATE ARCHBISHOP ROMERO WHILE WORKING WITH D'AUBUISSON, ALTHOUGH THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO PROOF OF [REDACTED] ALLEGATION.

6. [REDACTED] PROVIDED SEVERAL EXAMPLES WHICH DEMONSTRATED LEIVA'S AGGRESSIVE AND RADICAL APPROACH TOWARD COUNTERINSURGENT OPERATIONS WHILE SERVING AS A-11:

A. [REDACTED] TOLD [REDACTED] THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY KILLED ELEVEN SUSPECTED GUERRILLAS BY THROWING THEM BOUND BUT ALIVE FROM AN FAES C-47 AT NIGHT OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN UNDER ORDERS FROM LEIVA IN 1988. [REDACTED] SAID FOUR OF THE PRISONERS WERE FROM A-11 HOLDING CELLS. THE REMAINING SEVEN WERE DELIVERED TO THE AIRCRAFT JUST PRIOR TO TAKE OFF BY PARACHUTE BATTALION COMMANDER MAJOR REY ((RODRIGUEZ)) HURTADO. THE AIRCRAFT WAS PILOTED BY CAPTAIN RAFAEL HUMBERTO ((PALACIOS)) PENA.

B. [REDACTED] TOLD [REDACTED] FROM WHICH HE BELIEVES AT LEAST 10 BOUND PRISONERS WERE DROPPED ALIVE OVER THE OCEAN. [REDACTED] SAID [REDACTED] HAD BEEN ORDERED BY LEIVA TO ADVISE UNIDENTIFIED PERSONNEL ESCORTING THE PRISONERS WHEN HE WAS 15 MINUTES FROM THE SALVADORAN COAST HEADING OVER THE OCEAN. THE PRISONERS, WHICH [REDACTED] WERE SEEN LOADED ONTO THE AIRCRAFT, WERE GONE WHEN [REDACTED] RETURNED [REDACTED] AND HE HAD MADE NO OTHER LANDINGS.

C. [REDACTED] HE HAD PERSONALLY EXECUTED FIVE SUSPECTED CRIMINALS IN [REDACTED] BY SHOOTING THEM IN THE HEAD AND DISPOSING OF THE BODIES BY HELICOPTER OVER GUAZAPA VOLCANO. [REDACTED] LEIVA AUTHORIZED THE MISSION AND BRIEFED PILOTS LT HUGO CRESTES ((VASQUEZ)) PENATE AND 2LT JUAN CARLOS ((ORANTES)) MORAN TO LOAD "SPECIAL CARGO" AT THE DARK END OF THE RUNWAY [REDACTED] AND DROP IT AT HIS ORDER OVER GUAZAPA. [REDACTED] SAID HE HAD KILLED OTHERS SUSPECTED OF HEINOUS CRIMES IN THE SOYAPANGO/ILOPANGO AREA AT THE EXPRESS ORDER OF GENERAL BUSTILLO WHO WAS BRIEFED ON THE KILLINGS.

D. [REDACTED] AN A-11 CASE OFFICER, SAID IN MID-1988 THAT IN 1988 THE A-11 DEPARTMENT HAD HELD IN SECRET TWO OLDER SALVADORAN MEN AS SUSPECTED FMLN INSURGENTS FOR ABOUT FOUR MONTHS, WELL OVER THE 72-HOUR LEGAL HOLDING LIMIT. INTERROGATION AND INVESTIGATION FAILED TO SUPPORT THE A-11'S SUSPICIONS. INSTEAD OF RELEASING THE TWO MEN AND FACING PROBLEMS OVER THE LENGTHY AND ILLEGAL DETENTION, UNIDENTIFIED A-11 EMPLOYEES EXECUTED THEM AND SECRETLY DISPOSED OF THE BODIES. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT ENLISTED MEN WOULD LIKELY NEVER HAVE MADE THIS DECISION ON THEIR OWN AND THAT LEIVA LIKELY GAVE THE ORDER DIRECTLY [REDACTED]

E. [REDACTED] THE PRACTICE OF DROPPING PRISONERS FROM FAIR HELICOPTERS AND AIRPLANES WAS CALLED "NIGHT FREE FALL TRAINING" AND WAS COMMON DURING LEIVA'S TERM AS A-II AND A-III. IN FACT, LEIVA EARNED A REPUTATION AS BEING THE SENIOR DUTY OFFICER TO SEE TO GET SUCH ACTIVITIES APPROVED. [REDACTED] BRAGGED [REDACTED] THAT HE HAD FLOWN MANY NIGHT FREE FALL TRAINING MISSIONS. NO FURTHER DETAILS WERE PROVIDED.

7. [REDACTED] ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS HIT MEN OF THE LEIVA A-II WAS ISMAEL MENDOZA ((REYES)) AKA "RAMON". RAMON WAS A SURVIVOR OF THE "MORAZAN COMMANDOS", A LEGENDARY SPECIAL UNIT BASED IN MORAZAN IN THE LATE 1970'S. RAMON WORKED FOR ECHEVARRIA UNTIL HE LEFT THE A-II IN JANUARY 1990. [REDACTED] SAID RAMON REPORTEDLY NOW RUNS A BROTHEL IN SAN SALVADOR. [REDACTED] RAMON WAS REPUTED TO BE A BRAVE AND RUTHLESS KILLER OF INSURGENTS AND WAS TASKED WITH ONLY THE MOST DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS MISSIONS. HE SAID RAMON WAS SENT ALONE TO KILL THREE ARMED GUERRILLAS SURVEILLING AN A-II OPERATION JUST BEFORE THE 1989 OFFENSIVE. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, RAMON TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO TRACK DOWN THREE ARMED GUERRILLAS WHO HAD BLOWN UP A BUS (AFTER CHASING AWAY THE PASSENGERS) ON WHICH HE WAS RIDING. RAMON FOUND THE ATTACKERS ENJOYING THEIR VICTORY IN A NEARBY CAFE AND DESPATCHED ALL THREE BEFORE THEY COULD DEFEND THEMSELVES.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]